



# JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

*The newsletter of the National Christian Council in Japan*

ISSN 0021-4353

Number 731

Spring 2002

PROCESSED

MAY 30 2002

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Editorial Comment

## "You Are My Witnesses"

If we dare to say, "Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!" we are enjoined to listen and respond to what else the Bible has to say: "You are my witness" (Luke 24:48). Just as the disciples witnessed in the first century of the Christian era, we, too, can show the world by what we do and say that the risen Christ is with us and inspiring us to work for a better world. Conflict and violence is ubiquitous but there is also hope. We can be a significant part of the continuing story about the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is the risen Christ who has inspired many people related to NCCJ to work together with others—with Christians ecumenically and also along with people of other faiths—to bring about transformation, peace, and justice in our world today. This issue of JCAN focuses on some of the member organizations of NCCJ and highlights NCCJ's various ecumenical activities. (C. G-Y, Co-Editor)

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*The kanji character "shin" which means "belief" in Japanese. The women saw the empty tomb and believed ( Mt 28:8-10).*



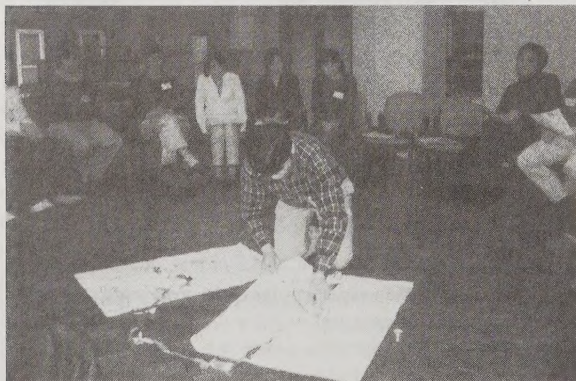
# Ecumenical Youths in Japan Find Themselves in Harmony in Diversity

In the midst of a tapestry of denominational and ethnic backgrounds, thirty-five young Christians in Japan experienced ecumenical harmony at a seminar by the Youth and Young Adults Committee of the National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ) that was held in Tokyo from March 21st to 24th.

Participants in the First National Ecumenical Youth Event included youth and young adult members of the Korean and Japanese member churches of the NCCJ and related local ecumenical youth organizations, as well as an Italian Catholic priest and Japanese Catholic workers and students. The aim of the event was to strengthen their network and leadership while sharing a common vision of hope for peace and social liberation through eye-opening encounters and intensive fellowship, on the theme, "Unity and Diversity in the Youth Ecumenical Movement".

An ecumenical flag, torn apart during the opening worship service as a symbolic expression of the division of churches and *oikos* (the whole inhabited world of God), was woven together at the end of the entire program with colored ribbons, on which ecumenical wishes of the participants were written.

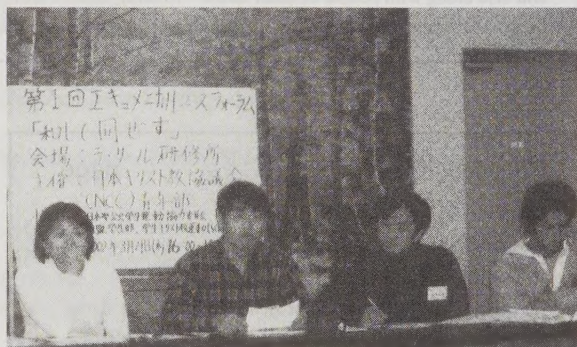
Two young adult leaders and a senior ecumenical leader shared their experiences in the ecumenical movement in their presentations in the first session. Among them was Park Ahkija, a member of the Korean Church of Christ in Japan (KCCJ). "Another member of my church said that God is like *omochi* [stretchy and sticky Japanese rice cake], and so I want to be a piece of *omochi*," she said, symbolizing her wish to reach out to and connect people from different backgrounds and churches, as contrasted with a sacramental piece of bread broken from the body of Christ.



Opening worship on March 21.

Park, a member of the Korean minority in Japan who has experienced ethnic discriminations in the country by the Japanese after her ancestors were brought by Japan from Korea to the country for forced labor before World War II, added, "Our differences should not be covered up by simply saying that we are one in Christ. I want to be an ecumenical person through making peace while we try to recognize and accept our differences and understand each other".

Yoshifumi Murase, a student of theology at Kwansei Gakuin University in Kobe, Japan, told the audience that the ecumenical movement is "not something organized by church



Yoshifumi Murase (second from left) shares experiences of the ecumenical youth movement as Park Ahkija (left) and Rev. Renta Nishihara (second from right) listen at the first session on March 21st.

leaders", but "something that starts in our daily lives through love and pain as experienced by Jesus as a journey to find oneself while seeking Jesus," referring to his own ecumenical experiences in the Pre-Assembly Youth Event and the 8th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Harare, Zimbabwe in December, 1998.

Murase, a young adult Assembly member of the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ), stressed the importance and joy of living together in diversity that he had through serving a community of the mentally disabled people in India as a voluntary worker.

And Rev. Renta Nishihara, a minister of the Nippon Sei Ko Kai (NSSK, or the Anglican Church in Japan) and Deputy Moderator of the NCCJ, shared his own experience of involvement into the ecumenical movement through an encounter with a Korean friend in Kyoto who was discriminated against



by the Japanese when he was a student.

"When I told him that I had nothing to do with such discrimination because I had no such discriminative feeling against Korean minorities in Japan, I was punched by him and lost two of my teeth," said Nishihara, adding that the experience made him realize that he was still in the structure of such discrimination created through the prewar history of the ethnic minority brought to Kyoto by the Japanese for forced labor.

"The ecumenical movement has two inter-linked dimensions; staying together with those with different backgrounds through on-site, issue-oriented service, and inter-church dialogue on faith and order based on the Bible," he explained, adding that future tasks of the ecumenical movement should include interfaith dialogue and "inner-net" working with the whole Earth as well as human beings.

The program also featured brainstorming sessions facilitated by Yoshinori Ikezumi, former head of the Asian Health Institute (AHI) and a lay person of the Anglican Church, on contemporary social problems. The brainstorming was followed by original dramas on the young Jesus devised by the participants on specific themes from among these problems, such as gender and ethnic discrimination against Korean residents in Japan. Participants found their own leadership to practice the theme in their own community.

Some moments of tension clouded the atmosphere of a dialogue between Protestant and Catholic participants at an informal session on the third day, when the issue of ordination of women was raised. That atmosphere, however, was cleared in the end with a fellowship of reconciliation through prayers and

a Catholic song of unity in Christ, which was shared again at the closing worship service.

"All participants found their starting point toward a faith network movement for living together in the 21st century", said Rev. Hidefumi Kitani, organizer of the event and the Executive Secretary of the Youth and Young Adult Committee of the NCCJ.

By Hisashi Yukimoto, Co-Editor

## Reflection on the First Ecumenical Youth Event

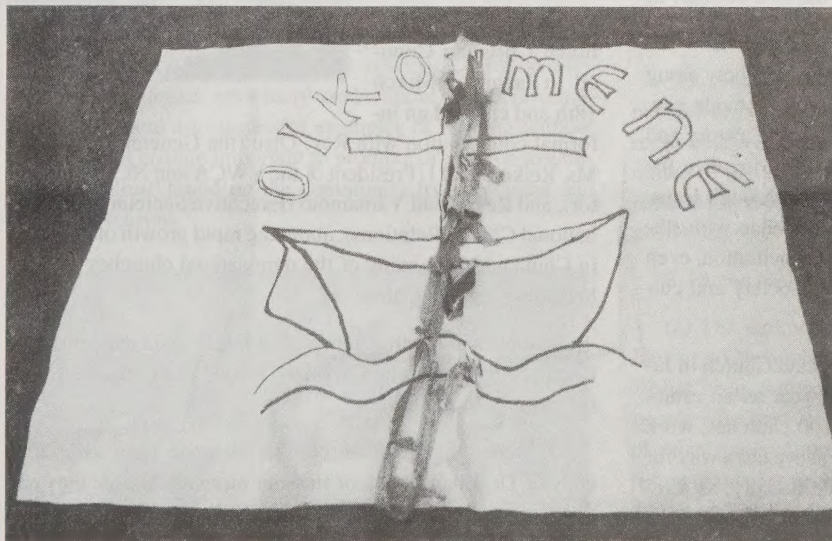
From March 21–24, the youth committee of the NCC held its first ecumenical youth event in Tokyo. Thirty-five young people gathered together to find a new vision and hope for the future of their ecumenical movement. The theme was "Unity and Diversity in the Youth Ecumenical Movement." This theme is based on the word *oikos* (inhabited world) for the purpose of uprooting racism, classism and sexism.

All the participants were very impressed by the training course (facilitated by Mr. Yoshinori Ikezumi, who is a lay member of the Anglican Church) and discovered their own leadership to put this theme into practice in their own communities. A unique point of the program was the search for the identity of the young Jesus in his 20s. The participants were divided into small groups and practiced a short drama to portray a new ecumenical identity of the young Jesus. They asked the question of how he focused on *oikos* not only in the Jewish community but also with other religious communities in his period. If Jesus were living in our reality, how would he create a new image of an ecumenical youth movement?

In this event, all participants found a starting point for creating a faith network movement for living together in the 21st century.

By Hidefumi Kitani

Executive Secretary of the Youth and Young Adult Committee of NCCJ



*Ecumenical flag once torn apart to symbolize the divisions among churches and the world was woven together with a chain of ribbons with participants' wishes and thoughts for the ecumenical movement at the closing worship.*



## Greetings From Rev. Park Soo-Kil , New General Secretary of the Korean Christian Church in Japan



Rev. Park Soo-Kil

Annyung Hashimnika?\*

My name is Rev. Park Soo-Kil. I was elected the new General Secretary for the KCCJ on October 25th 2001. I began working at the General Assembly office this January.

I was born in Seoul, Korea, and graduated from Ducksoo Commercial High School. I then worked as a public employee for the Korean Tax Bureau.

However, when I became a born-again Christian 21 years ago, I decided to enter Yonsei University. Following graduation, I had the opportunity to come to Japan as a foreign exchange student.

I arrived in Japan in April 1984, and began my life here. I was able to learn many things while serving as a minister at Osaka Church, Fuse Church, and Kyoto Church.

While thinking of my own change, I began to pray along the lines of 2 Corinthians 5:17, that I would be made new daily in the way of Christ. Then, in looking at the history and surrounding conditions of the KCCJ, I began to realize the many needs within this church. I believe that through Jesus, God offers us reconciliation with Himself as well as with others. God also offers us the good news of reconciliation, even from the viewpoint of politics, economics, society and culture.

This year, 2002, I and the Korean Christian Church in Japan look forward to celebrating our 94th year as an established church. It is my hope that we, as 100 churches, work together toward our 100-year celebration as we cut a way for a new history in following our Lord. Additionally, as a request for reconciliation in the reality of military and economic power, I desire to see a feeling of connectedness among all our churches as we pray, seeking God's kingdom and God's righteousness in this world.

\* Annyung Hashimnika = How are you?

## Planting Churches in China: Hong Kong Christian Council Staff Speaks in Tokyo

The Reverend Kim-kwong Chan, the Executive Secretary for Education and Training for the Hong Kong Christian Council, took time during a recent visit to Japan to share stories of the church in China with Christians in Japan. At Tokyo Union church and St. Alban's Anglican /Episcopal church on March 17th, he explained how the church has grown from less than one million Protestants in 1949, to over 35 million today,

In his 20 years of work with the rapidly growing churches of China, Dr. Chan has been seen many examples of God's power and faithfulness. He is committed to sharing these stories with Christians around the world, and hopes to find Japanese Christian publications interested in making some of the chapters from his latest book, *Witnesses to Power: Stories of God's Quiet Work in a Changing China*, available to Japanese Christians. The book, which was written with Tetsunao Yamamori, tells the stories of twelve very different Chinese Christians who overcome adversity "by drawing on a strength not their own."

Dr. Chan and his spouse, Adelina W.K. Wong, visited the National Christian Council in Japan on March 18th and enjoyed an informal conversation with Rev. Otsu (the General Secretary), Ms. Reiko Suzuki (President of the YWCA and NCCJ moderator), and Rev. Toshi Yamamoto (Executive Secretary for International Church Relations), about the rapid growth of churches in China and how many of the unregistered churches are also becoming legal in China.

Churches in North America, Europe, or Asia may email Dr Chan at the Hong Kong Christian Council ([ckk@hkcc.org.hk](mailto:ckk@hkcc.org.hk)) for more information.

Churches in Japan can contact Suzanne Hale to order a copy of Dr. Chan's book or find out more about how they can partner with the churches in China. Email her at [Halesuzanne@hotmail.com](mailto:Halesuzanne@hotmail.com).

By Suzanne Hale

Member of St Alban's Church





## New Director for Asian Rural Institute

On April 1, 2002, the Asian Rural Institute received a new director, Dr. Koa Tasaka. He replaces Rev. Jintaro Ueda who left ARI to become the Sei Ko Kai (Anglican/Episcopal) Bishop of Tokyo.

ARI is a Christian-based training institute in Nishi-Nasuno, Tochigi-ken, for rural leaders from developing countries.

Dr. Tasaka is no stranger to ARI. He has been coming to ARI since 1974 for various work camps. When he was teaching at the International Christian University (ICU) in Mitaka, he first came with a number of ICU students who were called the Committee for the Prevention of Starvation. Later he went to ARI for workcamps and religious programs. He has given a number of lectures on pesticide issues at ARI.

At ICU Dr Tasaka taught chemistry courses, service-learning programs, and general education courses as well as carrying out research on pesticide analysis. As ARI promotes organic farming, it is important to know the effects of pesticides.

When asked for the ARI newsletter "What are the most important experiences which have prepared you for the role of director at ARI?" he replied, "In 1982-83 I was sent by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency to Thailand for the promotion of science education. It was a precious experience to see various problems the people in rural areas are facing, particularly the social and economic injustice which prevents equal opportunity for everyone. Also, through pesticide analysis and surveys in Asian countries, I found very dangerous pesticides are widely used without correct information, while there are successful examples of farming without chemicals. It is quite important to promote organic or sustainable agriculture based on the community for ecological and economic reasons."



Dr. Koa Tasaka (third from right, front row), the new director of the Asian Rural Institute, with students.

ARI is organizing tours in May and June, and home stays with conventional and organic farming families. Contact Nancy Molin, a missionary assigned by the Common Global Ministries Board, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ/United Church of Christ) for more information.

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Asian Rural Institute  
442-1 Tsukinokizawa  
Nishinasuno, Tochigi-ken  
329-2703 Japan  
www.ari.edu

## Afghan Refugees In Japan

### *The WCC/CCA Inquiry Mission*

March 11, 2002

1. The members of the World Council of Churches, and Christian Conference of Asia Inquiry Mission met with Afghan asylum seekers, church leaders, representatives of NGOs, lawyers, and government officials engaged and/or dealing with matters relating to the issue of Afghan refugees in Japan. The delegation, through briefings and study of documents, papers, and other published materials, endeavored to understand the Japanese government's refugee policies and practices.

The Inquiry Mission was heartened to know there is a number of politicians, human right defenders, church leaders, representatives of citizen groups, and other individuals committed to the promotion and protection of humanitarian laws, particularly those relating to the conditions of detention of Afghan refugees.

2. On the basis of our inquiry, we have come to realize that:

(a) The number of Afghan asylum seekers in Japan from January to November 2001 is 77. However, only one out of the 77 has been granted refugee status. Also, the total number of people who have been granted refugee status, including those of other nationalities, since 1981 amounts to only 260. This figure compares poorly with those of other developed nations. At the end of last year, the Netherlands had accepted 23,626 refugees followed by Canada (9,345) and the US (4,321).

(b) The Afghan asylum seekers have been unfairly detained in the immigration bureau detention center, though they are still in the application procedure for refugee status. Also, there





*Clement John, Executive Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), expresses his concerns about the lack of humanitarian protection for Afghan asylum seekers in Japan at a meeting held in Tokyo on March 11th. Second from left is the General Secretary of the National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ) and third from left is Dr Ahn Jae-Woong, General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA).*

have been a lot of problems pointed out about the environment in the detention center. The medical treatment provided in the center is of very poor quality, and some detainees have tried to commit suicide. We are concerned about the violation of the human rights (as declared in international human rights law) of these people.

We would like to point out that according to the norms and standards of international humanitarian laws, practices of detention of asylum seekers, displaced persons and aliens with irregular status seeking protection or survival is to be considered arbitrary if the reasons, motives or interpretation are contrary to or deviating from UNHCR criteria and the provisions mentioned above. Arbitrary detention for reason of deterrence or other unacceptable reasons lead to human rights violations.

(c) The Japanese refugee recognition process is based on the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition law. There is no institution independent from the immigration bureau which specializes in inquiring about the conditions of asylum seekers. We find there is much room for improvement in the refugee recognition process, in order to maintain fairness and clarity toward asylum seekers in keeping with the norms and standards of international and humanitarian laws.

3. On the basis of our findings, we would like to express and suggest the following:

(a) The Japanese government has made a promise to donate 500 million dollars for the reconstruction and rebuilding of Afghanistan. We appreciate the government's humanitarian attitude toward the tragedy of Afghanistan. However, we regret that the government does not show the same kind of "humanitarian concern" toward the asylum seekers and refugees in Japan.

(b) The detained Afghan asylum seekers have all been persecuted by the Taliban regime, and some of them still suffer from the trauma. Also, in the process of investigation, some of them were suddenly interrogated and hauled about by the police, and some were sent to the detention center directly from the airport and have been detained for several months since then. The Japanese government must examine this process thoroughly to determine whether their detention was decided through full and fair screening based on humanitarian principles of refugee protection, which the Refugee Convention (which Japan has ratified) sets out. The Japanese government should make sure that its refugee policy will assure humanitarian concern in the whole process of refugee screening.

(c) The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for Japan and Korea has expressed its concern about the treatment of Afghan refugees in Japan. The arbitrary detention of asylum seekers and refugees should be discouraged. This international practice and policy is widely

accepted in different parts of the world.

We urge the Japanese government to seriously consider the release of Afghan asylum seekers pending decisions on their

cases. We strongly recommend that no asylum seekers should be forced to return to their country, given the present environment of instability and insecurity in Afghanistan.

Those presently under detention should be released as soon as possible, granted status of residence and provided with all necessary assistance from the humanitarian standpoint. Their deportation should be stopped until such time there is lasting peace and democratic government based on principles of plurality. Until then, they should be provided with all possible assistance from a humanitarian standpoint.





# New "Interreligious Studies in Japan" Program at the NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions

## Rationale

European countries that were until now predominantly Christian have recently changed into multireligious societies. Along with Islam, Asian religions such as Buddhism (Zen, etc.) and Asian religious practices (Yoga, Reiki, Fen hsui, etc.) are exerting considerable influence.

Multireligious societies must learn to understand and accept people of different religions. The religiously inspired terrorist attacks on the subways in Tokyo (1995) and on the Twin Towers in New York (2001) underscored the urgent need for interreligious communication and understanding. The example of Asian churches, which have been in a religiously plural world for a long time, can help to better respond to this challenge. They can offer experience and wisdom through study centers which are dedicated to research on Asian religions and interreligious dialogue. One of these institutes, the NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions, an institute of the National Christian Council of Japan (NCCJ), has established the "Interreligious Studies in Japan" program in order to assist church and theology to be better prepared for meeting the new challenges.

## Purpose

This program offers the following learning opportunities:

1. Convey a solid basic knowledge of religions in Japan
2. Introduction to Japanese culture and spirituality
3. Exposure to the situation of churches in a religiously plural environment
4. Experience interreligious dialogue
5. Introduction to problems of enculturation of Christianity
6. Introduction to Japanese theology
7. Introduction to theologies of religion

## Target Group

Protestant and Catholic students of theology; students of education who intend to become school teachers in religion; graduate and postgraduate students of theology, education, Japanese studies and religious studies.

Students are expected to be open to new learning experiences in a foreign culture. Solid knowledge of English is required for the classes.

## Curriculum

The program offers the following curriculum and activities:

1. Introduction to Shinto and Folk Religion
2. Introduction to Japanese Buddhism (history and different schools)
3. Introduction to Japanese New Religions
4. Introduction to Christianity in Japan
5. Introduction to Japanese Theology
6. Introduction to theology of religions
7. Introduction to basic Japanese language

The courses are held over a period of one semester (April–July, September–January).

## Exposure Program

-- Fieldtrips to Buddhist temples, Shinto shrines, headquarters of new religions, and Christian churches.

-- Dialogue meetings with representatives of other religions.

-- Participation in religious practice of the church and of other religions.

-- Special lectures by scholars on selected themes.

## Teaching Staff

The teachers of this program are experts in their field; they are selected by the advisory and executive committees.

## Advisory committee

Prof. em. Jan van Bragt (former Director of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture), Prof. Maejima Munetoshi (Kwansei Gakuin University, former General Secretary of the NCCJ), Prof. em. Mizugaki Wataru (Kyoto University), Prof. em. Yuki Hideo (Doshisha University; NCC Center, Director)

## Executive committee

Prof. em. Hayashi Tadayoshi (Kwansei Gakuin University), Rev. Higuchi Susumu (Kyodan/ United Church of Christ; Board of Trustees, NCC Center), Prof. Katayanagi Eiichi (Kyoto University), Prof. Miyasho Tetsuo (Doshisha University), Prof. Mizutani Makoto (Doshisha University), Prof. Nakamichi Motoo (Kwansei Gakuin University), Prof.



Robert Rhodes (Otani University), Dr. Martin Repp (NCC Center, Coordinator of the program), Rev. Teramoto Tomomasa (Nishi Hongan-ji [Pure Land Buddhism], Secretary for the program).

The NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions is an ecumenical research institute of the National Christian Council of Japan. Since its foundation in 1958, it is pursuing studies of religions in Japan, research in enculturation of Christianity, and interreligious dialogue. It is located in central Kyoto next to the Imperial Palace Park and houses a library in English and Japanese on religions in Japan, as well as on history, culture, etc. The Center also publishes the journals *Japanese Religions* and *Deai* (Encounter). It cooperates with similar research centers in the Ecumenical Group for the Study of Interreligious Dialogue (EGSID) in Japan and the network Inter-Religio in East Asia, as well as with research institutes of various religious groups and universities in Japan.

#### *Living Costs and Tuition*

Living costs (estimate): minimum US \$1,000 per month.

Accommodation costs: approximately US \$300–\$500 per month.

Tuition for the program: US \$ 500 per semester.

#### *Requirements for Application*

Application form (to be filled out in English); CV (including university studies, hobbies and volunteer activities); a letter of recommendation by a professor, photocopy of passport (validity minimum one year, for visa application procedure); letter of guarantee for sufficient financial support (e.g. scholarship).

#### *Application deadline:*

March 31. for fall semester, October 31. for spring semester. Application is to be sent to the coordinator of the program.

### *Japanese Religions*

Do you know *Japanese Religions*? An English journal published in January and July by the NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions. The theme of the January 2002 issue is Shingon Buddhism, the esoteric and today very popular form of Buddhism founded in Japan by Kukai in the early ninth century. The July 2002 issue will include articles on the troubles caused by translating God as *kami* in Japanese and Buddhist participation in the World Congress of Religions in 1893, among others. A subscription costs 3600 yen for two years (four issues). For further details, email [studycen@mbox.kyoto-inet.or.jp](mailto:studycen@mbox.kyoto-inet.or.jp) or call 075-432-1945.

#### *For further inquiries:*

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## Residential Seminars on Japanese Religions

The NCC Center in Kyoto will host two residential seminars in September. One is scheduled for sometime during the first two weeks. It will be in Japanese and its theme is "Bringing salvation to all people - Rennyo and his thought."

Rennyo (1415-1499) rejuvenated the True Pure Land Buddhism, gave it a new structure and formulated a positive approach. These changes were essential to the spread of his kind of Buddhism.

The second is scheduled for 26–27 September in English. The theme is "Christianity in Kyoto - Continuations of History". It will be held in Kyoto.

Details can be obtained from the NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions.

### NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions Calendar Highlights

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| Feb 2    | Meeting of EGSID, a national Network of Christian Centers for Interreligious Dialogue                 |
|          | and Studies of Japanese Religions   |
| Feb 22   | Lecture Series on Christianity and Death - "Death of Jesus"   |
| April 19 | Lecture Series on Christianity and Death - "Death that Kills, Death that Gives Birth: Death and Love" |
| April 25 | Study group on "Manga and Religion"   |
| May 17   | Lecture Series on Christianity and Death - "The Death We Share"                                       |

Please contact the Center if interested in any of the lectures, study groups, or seminars.



## Interfaith Network for Peace Inaugurated to Oppose "Emergency" Legislation

As the ruling coalition government of Japan moves to submit to the Diet a package of bills governing the country's response with the U.S. military to a foreign military attack, Christians, Buddhists and Muslims in Japan became united at the grassroots level at a meeting in Tokyo on April 2, to inaugurate the Interfaith Network for Peace against that move for Japan's militarization.

The participants appealed for prayers and actions for peace on the common ground of nonviolence for the dignity of life and maintaining firmly the Peace Constitution of Japan that renounces war.

The package include a bill to revise the current Self-Defense Forces Law which stipulates that the Defense Agency chief would be able to order the SDF to build defensive facilities to cope with emergency situations provided the agency chief obtains the prime minister's approval. SDF personnel would be able to use arms in this respect to protect themselves.

It also includes a bill to revitalize the functions of the council by establishing a special panel headed by the chief Cabinet secretary. The question of whether to include legal guidelines to cope with terrorism and spy ships in waters near Japan is being considered.

The interfaith group, along with the Christian Network for Peace, an interdenominational network in Japan, and the Citizens' Coalition Against Worsening the Constitution, is in an urgent move to promote a fund-raising campaign for an advertisement in the Tokyo edition of the *Asahi Shinbun* newspaper on the Japanese Constitution Day of May 3 to demonstrate their opposition to the legislation and claim that the peace Constitution be spared.

"We need a power not only to oppose the move for the legislation but also to stop it so that the lives of all persons and future generations will be preserved," said Rev. Kenichi Otsu, General Secretary of the National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ) at the Tokyo meeting, calling for support for the advertisement campaign and participation in a demonstration in front of the Diet on April 3rd as well as a large-scale peace rally on April 19th in Tokyo.

By Hisashi Yukimoto, Co-Editor



*Leaders and members of Christian, Islamic, and Buddhist communities in Japan gather together for the inauguration of the Interfaith Network for Peace in Tokyo on April 2, as Ms. Reiko Suzuki, moderator of the National Christian Council in Japan (NCC), speaks to the audience about the causes of war and peace.*

## FOOD BANK JAPAN: Food for All People

At noon on March 11, 2002, 15 concerned individuals came together at the Catholic Center on the Campus of Sophia University to ratify our Articles of Association, business plan, and board members. In addition, 17 other individuals voted by proxy. This was the first step in order to file paperwork with the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG) to be a non-profit legal corporation.

One cannot understate the significance of this step. While many groups are non-profits, only a small minority have taken the necessary steps to become a non-profit corporation recognized by the government.

Rev. Aso gave the opening remarks. He commented on the significance of seeing so many people gather to address this issue. He went on to comment that the feeding of the 5000 seemed like an impossible task, and yet it happened (Matthew 14: 13-21). But most importantly, he reminded us that we should, as much as possible, have fun as we carry out this work.

For a copy of the Articles of Association and the business plan, please contact Charlie McJilton.

History was made that Monday. The people have spoken and they believe that there should be Food for all people...

By Charles E. McJilton  
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[www.foodbankjapan.org](http://www.foodbankjapan.org)



## Introducing

# The Tomisaka Christian Center

Tomisaka Christian Center sprang from the work of the German East Asia Mission. Together with churches in East Asia and study groups in other countries, it undertakes interdisciplinary research into issues of Christian social ethics.

Tomisaka Christian Center is associated with the National Christian Council in Japan (NCC-J) as one of its member organizations. During the past 19 years over 200 researchers, specialists, ministers, and members of religious communities have collaborated in its research activities. Each study group consists of about ten members and does research over a number of years. Seventeen books have been published as a result.

The early history of the Tomisaka Christian Center may be traced back to the Meiji period, over one hundred years ago. Tomisaka was one of the first areas selected by the German church for its mission in Japan. The Deutsche East Asia Mission ran a church kindergarten and there was also a student dormitory. The facility was called the Tomisaka Seminar House.

During the 1970s the German churches changed the policy of their overseas missions, moving away from activities directed by German churches to a policy of undertaking mission partnership with national churches. As a result, the Tomisaka Christian Center came into being. Several of the facilities were reorganized into one and the Center began its activities in 1982.

Since 1998, Tomisaka Christian Center has been offering scholarships to researchers working with churches in East Asia. For donations or participation in the scholarships, contact Tomisaka Christian Center.

Tomisaka Scholarships were recently given to these individuals:

1998–1999 Park Song Joon (Presbyterian pastor from Korea) researched Mingjung Theology and Quaker Spirituality in Union Theological Seminary in New York and Pendle Hill in the USA.

1998–2000 Xue Ean Feng (from mainland China) researched and wrote his doctoral dissertation on Christian history in mainland China.

2000–2002 Rev. Suneel Busi (Lutheran pastor and

seminary professor at Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute in Chennai, India) is soon to receive his PhD degree at International Christian University on Dalit Theology in comparison to the discrimination against the Buraku in Japan from a religious point of view.

Tomisaka Christian Center's mission is for the church with great dreams for the future—a church which may have the strength to never again be caught up in an oppressive regime.

Tomisaka Christian Center cooperates with various institutes, such as the Evangelical Interdisciplinary Science Study Center in Germany, the Korean Theological Study Institute, and with other Christian study centers in Korea. Various publications have come about as a result, including the book *Historical Resource Materials on Japanese–Korean Christian Relations*.

Tomisaka Christian Center strives to continue an international network and exchange among researchers. Tomisaka Christian Center also holds ecumenical seminars and prayer meetings each year in different parts of Japan.

There are 11 Study Groups at Tomisaka Christian Center:

- (1) Koreans in Japan: Lifestyle and Autonomy
  - (2) Pastoral Psychology
  - (3) Resources for Contemporary Chinese Christian History
  - (4) Issues of Food in East Asia
  - (5) Spirituality and Ethics in the Contemporary World
  - (6) New Religious Movements in Japan
  - (7) Children, Culture and Christianity
  - (8) The Constitution of Japan, the Self-Defense Force, the United Nations
  - (9) Christian Peace Movement in Japan after World War II
  - (10) German Mission History in Japan
  - (11) Christianity and the Tenno System
- For more information, please contact:  
Tomisaka Christian Center  
2-9-4 Koishikawa, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 112-0002  
Study groups: tel 03-3812-3852, fax 03-3817-7261  
Management office: tel/fax 03-5800-4557  
<http://www2u.biglobe.ne.jp/~Tomisaka/tomisaka@mti.biglobe.ne.jp>

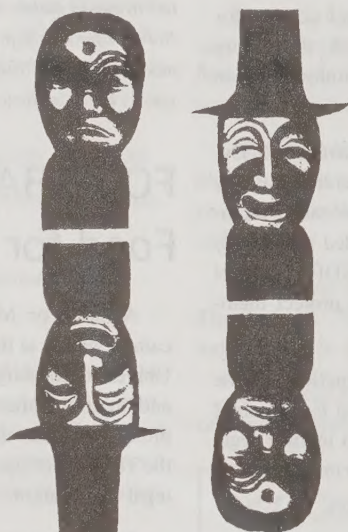


Illustration by Tachio Tomiyama







## Joint Catholic–NCCJ Petition on Energy and Climate Treaty

The leaders of the Japan Catholic Council for Peace and Justice, Franciscans International Japan and the NCCJ and its Peace and Nuclear Issues Committee, sent a petition on March 14 to Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi concerning Japan's energy policy, the Kyoto Protocol and related policy measures and laws. The following is a brief summary of the original two-and-a-half page Japanese text.

1. We welcome the government's announcement on February 13 that it will ratify the Kyoto Protocol and pass related bills;

2. We regret that Prime Minister Koizumi has weakened his posture in requesting the participation in and ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by the United States at his press conference during President Bush's visit to Japan on February 18. During this meeting President Bush announced his own climate policy in opposition to the Kyoto Protocol.

3. We oppose the Liberal Democratic Party's policy of endorsing the use of nuclear power and the Basic Energy Bill that will prevent the promotion of natural sources of energy.

4. We are concerned about the New Energy Bill being proposed by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, which will prevent natural sources of energy from being more widely used.

We make the following requests:

(a) Maximize the use of natural sources of energy without relying on wasteful power generators or the use of nuclear power. Also, create more jobs and build environmentally sound, sustainable communities.

(b) Maximize Japan's domestic actions to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions and minimize the counting of overseas emission reductions as domestic. Be in solidarity with the victims of climate change who do not have the resources to deal with it by themselves.

(c) Demand of the Bush administration that the United States do away with its isolationist policy on climate change and ratify the Kyoto Protocol, on which its policy should be based.

(d) Reflect the above items in the government's policy in the spirit of the Preamble of the Japanese Constitution that "no nation is responsible to itself alone." The Bible shows us that human beings are called to care for all people and to give the gift of life, deny themselves, and serve the weak.

(Translated and summarized by H. Y.)

## Letter from NCC-J to NCCC- USA Concerning Climate Change

Rev. Dr. Robert Edger

General Secretary

National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA

March 20, 2002

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ at the NCCC-USA,

We would like to send our Christian greetings to you during this occasion of Easter. We believe that our Lord is living among us and working through history. He is the ruler of our history.

You are always in our prayers when we think of America's horrible experience on September 11, 2001. We pray for the victims of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington D.C. We also pray to stop the killing of innocent people in Afghanistan.

We are writing this letter to you regarding our concern on climate change. We were pleased to hear the recent news that your Eco-Justice Working Group received an EPA Climate Protection Award, and offer our congratulations. We are also encouraged by your February 26th initiative for the Interfaith Call for Energy Conservation and Climate Justice, and express our full support for it.

Regarding this issue, ever since last August, we have been wanting to ask you to urge President Bush to ratify and execute the Kyoto Protocol in COP3. We would like to ask you to convey our request to President Bush to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. As you know, Mr. Bush has refused to ratify it, and instead, on February 14, 2002, announced his government's own initiative called Clear Skies & Global Climate Change Initiatives. We fervently hope you can approach your government with either your own ideas or with actions that will help to curb climate change.

President Bush seems to fear that the Kyoto Protocol will bring a slowdown in the economy and the industrial output of the U.S.A., affecting the comfortable life-style of his people; therefore, he refuses to sign the Protocol. On the other hand, in order to punish the terrorists who attacked the U.S.A., the President has worked hard to enlist the cooperation and participation of many countries. In the evolution of the world community, to work only for the wealth and development of one's own country is not an idea in touch with the times. Without international cooperation, the future of the globe and its abundant life is exposed to great danger. We believe that the self-centered attitude of the United States is wrong. This is an era in which world peace and coexistence are issues that go



hand in hand, and for which we must work together.

In the 1997 United Nations Framework Convention On Climate Change, Third Conference of the Parties (COP3), we participated in the WCC delegation. At this convention, the NGO Franciscans International sponsored a session to brief the press concerning the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) with the theme "Survival of the Weakest." In this Kyoto convention, the World Council of Churches and others at the Kansai Seminar House, as well as various religious groups (Buddhists, Protestants, Catholics, etc.) at a Catholic church, held meetings and issued a joint statement on our common work to help solve environmental problems. We believe that this is not just a problem for others, but for all of us.

The small island states are places where human and oceanic life exist in the most imperiled biospheres on earth. Such states must face the imminent crises of climate change, global warming, and a life-threatening rise in sea levels worldwide. The situation is critical for not only the small island states, but for all of us, bringing all the planet's creations to a crisis of survival.

We, therefore, have decided to continue our prayer and work to ensure Japan's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol this year, minimizing its loopholes and maximizing the domestic reduction of the designated greenhouse gases. As we pray for the work of the National Christian Council of Churches in the U.S.A., we also ask for your prayers and help in this concern.

In Christ,

Ms. Reiko Suzuki, Moderator

Rev. Kenichi Otsu, General Secretary

National Christian Council in Japan

## Statement to Protest the Visit by Prime Minister Koizumi to Yasukuni Shrine on April 21

Dear Prime Minister Koizumi:

On behalf of Christians who are seeking peace, we strongly protest your visit, during this time of spring memorial festival, to the Yasukuni Shrine on April 21. Your visit to the Yasukuni Shrine clearly violates the constitutional principle of the separation of religion and the state and we urge you not to pay a visit to the shrine again.

Yasukuni has enshrined war dead as gods for their devotion to the Emperor. The Shrine also enshrined Class A war crimi-

nals who were responsible for the war crimes as gods. Reflecting deeply upon the past war of aggression committed under State Shinto and militarism, the Japanese Constitution stipulated the separation of religion and the state and denounced the war in expressing our determination that we will not repeat our mistakes again. Your visit to Yasukuni Shrine is an act of double violation against the constitution in the sense that it plays a role in promoting militarism and in affirming the past war as well as to violating the principle of the separation of religion and the state.

The Koizumi Cabinet dispatched Japanese Self-Defense Forces to support the U.S. war of retaliation in Afghanistan. Even now the "War Legislation" emergency bills are in the process of submission to the Diet. This speedy act of militarization tramples down our hope to seek peace. It is quite natural that there have been strong voices of concern raised over the possibility of the remilitarization of Japan from neighboring countries as they greatly suffered from the past war of Japanese aggression. Their concerns turned out to be reality backed by your visit to Yasukuni Shrine and it will only invite condemnation from our neighbors and further inflame these relationships. It is not simply a matter of "when" you pay a visit to the shrine.

The chain reactions of terrorism and conflict in various places in the world clearly indicate that military forces will never bring about peace. We firmly believe that what is needed now is justice and peace which transcend the nationality and ethnicity that ensures the values of life of people. It is furthermore important to build a society with justice and peace through diplomatic efforts and economic assistance based upon the Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution as so to receive an honorable status in the international community.

We sincerely request that you make an apology to our people and neighboring countries for your visit to the shrine which is a symbol of militarism. We also request that you will work for reconciliation and peace in the world.

Sincerely,

Ms. Reiko Suzuki, Moderator

Rev. Kenichi Otsu, General Secretary

National Christian Council in Japan

### Related websites:

NCC-J Peace and Nuclear Issues Committee:

<http://www.jca.apc.org/ncc-j/heiwa.html> (Japanese)

Japan Catholic Bishops Council of Justice and Peace:

<http://www.jade.dti.ne.jp/~jpp/index-frameset-eng.html> (English)

<http://www.jade.dti.ne.jp/~jpp/indexJP.html> (Japanese)

3. Franciscans International Japan:

<http://fi-j.swec.to/> (Japanese)



## Letter from NCC-J to NCCC-USA Concerning President Bush's Proposed Visit to Meiji Shrine

Ms. Brenda Girton Mitchell  
NCCC-USA

February 15, 2002

Dear Ms. Girton Mitchell:

Greetings from Tokyo!

Following up on our conversation on the phone a few days ago and my fax letter dated Feb 14, there seems to be a new development regarding the possible Meiji Shrine visit by Bush and Koizumi. According to the Japanese newspaper this morning, it was reported that Prime Minister Koizumi has now decided to wait outside of the Meiji Shrine while President Bush visits the Shrine. The decision was made on the basis of understanding that it is contrary to the article on the Separation of Religion and State in the Japanese constitution.

As I indicated in my last communication, the State, on the basis of State Shinto, forced not only the Japanese people but also other people in Asia to bow towards the Imperial Palace and worship at Shinto shrines, depriving them of their rights and their freedom of religion and conscience. Reflecting deeply upon this past history, it was Article 20 of the Constitution, which stipulated the separation of religion and the state, ensured freedom of religion, and prohibited the interference or the protection of any particular religion by the state. Article 89 also prohibits the use of public money for a religious institution.

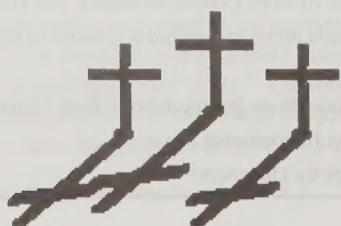
We sincerely hope that the churches in the US will give advice to President Bush so that he gives up the idea of paying an official visit to Meiji Shrine.

Peace and Grace,

Rev. Kenichi Otsu

General Secretary, NCC-J

*Editor's note: President Bush was in Japan from February 17-20, 2002 and did pay an official visit to the Meiji Shrine while Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi waited outside in his car.*



## Letter from NCC-J to Mr. Ariel Sharon, Prime Minister of Israel

Dear Prime Minister Ariel Sharon:

We, Japanese Christians, have been deeply saddened to know that many citizens, both Israelis and Palestinians were killed and injured as a result of the continuous violent conflicts between Palestine and Israel since the year 2000. We also have been hearing the outcries from Christians in Palestine appealing to us regarding the suffering and casualties caused by the Israeli military attacks. We also know that many Israelis are seeking for peace. Now, we are grateful to hear that the Israeli military forces will withdraw from Bethlehem and other occupied territory and resume the peace negotiations. We hope and pray that this opportunity will pave the way for a lasting peace.

We deeply regret that "Christian nations" have persecuted Jewish people for many years. We especially repent that many Christians were merely onlookers during the cruel atrocities committed under the Nazi regime. However, it will lead to a similar Nazi genocide policy if the Israeli government continues to invade the Palestinian ruled territory and take the land and water away, destroy homes and build settlements which threaten Palestinian livelihood, and kill Palestinians. This is an act of violation against human dignity. We also oppose the act of indiscriminate killings such as suicide bombings by Palestinian. However, we believe that the suicide bombings will continue to happen and there will be no security for both Palestinians and Israelis, unless the illegal occupation of Palestine comes to an end.

In praying that people in Palestine and Israel will live peacefully together as fellow human beings, we request the following:

- 1) Put all atrocities to an end and keep the human dignity of Palestinians.
- 2) Implement the past UN resolutions, especially with the one by the UN Security Council.
- 3) Recognize Palestine as a state and completely withdraw from occupied territory in accordance with International laws.
- 4) Allow the Palestinian refugees since the establishment of Israel in 1948, to return to their homes.

Peace and grace,

Ms. Reiko Suzuki

Moderator, NCC-J

Rev. Kenichi Otsu

General Secretary, NCC-J



## Resources Available from CCA

### 1. *Stewards of all of Creation* (ISBN: 962-7439-28-2)

An educational book on environmental issues in Asia which was published by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) in December 2001, following the CCA Environmental Training meeting in Korea in June 2001. A good Christian resource to prepare for the upcoming WSSD, which includes presentation papers by participants in the meeting including Hisashi Yukimoto from Japan, Dr. David G. Hallman (WCC climate change program coordinator), Dr. Prawate Khid-arn (CCA Co-Executive Secretary on Development and Service and the coordinator of the meeting, acting as the Asian member of the WCC delegation to the WSSD process), Professor Elizabeth S. Taipa (a feminist eco-theologian from the Philippines), as well as a lot of resources on the UN negotiations and treaties on global environmental issues and the WCC engagement in addressing climate change, toward the WSSD.

This book can be ordered from:

Christian Conference of Asia  
96, 2nd District, Pal Tin Village  
Mei Tin Road, Shatin, N.T.  
Hong Kong SAR

Tel: (852)2691-1068. Fax: (852)2692-4378

Email: [cca@cca.org.hk](mailto:cca@cca.org.hk)

Website: [www.cca.org.hk](http://www.cca.org.hk)

### 2. *Okinawan and Japanese Hymns in English*

(a) Okinawan hymn, "Come, Smell the Scent of Sweet Wild Flowers." Available from CCA Hymnal on the Internet at: <http://202.64.82.162/daga/cca/resframe.htm> (click "Songs" and find the button for this hymn in the song list).

#### (b) Japanese Hymns in English

An extensive bilingual website on Japanese hymns that have been translated into English can be found at

<http://member.nifty.ne.jp/dikaio/hymn/japanese/index.html>.

### 3. *Asia Sunday 2002 "Timor Lorosae: Hope for New Life"*

The resource book for Asia Sunday 2002 can be found at <http://www.cca.org.hk/home1.htm>.

## Book Review Addition

The book *Women Moving Mountains: Feminist Theology in Japan*, which was reviewed in JCAN #730, has an address for obtaining copies of the book in North America. Contact the editor/translator, Margaret Warren, a retired Kyodan missionary.

Email: [WarrenWW@Worldnet.att.net](mailto:WarrenWW@Worldnet.att.net)

Homepage: <http://www.geocities.com/warrenwordwork>

Address: 18402 Hwy 8, Morrison, CO 80465, USA

## JCAN Subscription Information NEW CHECK SYSTEM

In Japan, it is difficult to cash checks as a fee of 2000 yen is charged regardless of the amount of the check. Please now write a check payable to "Presbyterian Church (USA)" with designation for NCCJ Christian Activity News, and send to: Ms. Irene H. Kim, PCUSA, 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, Kentucky USA 40202-1396.

Our subscription fees do not cover our printing and mailing costs so we hope you will see these fees as a "donation" to our work. Subscribers in Japan, please pay 2000 yen a year (postal money order account #00180-4-75788 for JCAN). U.S. \$20 a year. Low income and retired \$15. Canada \$15. Other countries please email us: [JCAN@aol.com](mailto:JCAN@aol.com).

Back issues will be sent upon request, and no one is denied an issue because of lack of funds. Mail requests for back issues to NCCJ.

Donations to JCAN and the work of NCCJ may be made by individuals and churches in North America through an ECO [Extra Commitment Opportunity]. Write a check to the Presbyterian Church USA and list ECO #051621 and mark it for "Japan Christian Activity Newsletter/NCCJ".

We thank Rev. Insik Kim, Coordinator for East Asia/Pacific for the P.C. U.S.A. Worldwide Ministries Program, for his help in handling our ECO donations.

## Profile of Co-Editor

### Hisashi Yukimoto

Hisashi Yukimoto was formerly a staff writer of *The Christ Weekly* in Japan, a Tokyo correspondent of the *Ecumenical News International (ENI)*, and the Executive Secretary of the former NCCJ Center for Christian Response to Asian Issues (CCRAI) working primarily as the editor of its *Asia Tsushin* magazine. Hisashi now is a freelance journalist and translator as well as the editor of the *Ecumenical Bulletin*. He studied international relations at Meiji Gakuin University and also majored in the Environment and Sustainable Development at the United Nations University in Shibuya. His present involvements include working ecumenically on climate change and other environmental issues as well as being a member of the NCCJ Peace and Nuclear Issues Committee, a member of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Climate Change Network, and the coordinator of Christian Eco-Network in Japan. Hisashi is an active member of the Tokyo Union Church, an English-speaking interdenominational, international church. (Tokyo Union Church is also an associate member church of the NCCJ.) At church, he is active as a musician, singer, and member of the Outreach Ministry Team. He has been involved in various ecumenical programs, including the 8th Assembly of WCC in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1998 representing the Japanese Christian media.



## NCC-J Calendar Highlights

2002

## January

- 17-19 National Consultation and Gathering of "Gaikikyo" (National Christian Coalition on Alien Registration Law Problems) in Fukuoka
- 20 Day of Prayer for Christian Unity, co-sponsored by NCCJ and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan
- 21 Meeting to oppose "Emergency Legislation" and "Bill on Referendum for Revising the Constitution" in Diet Building
- 25 Lawsuit against enforcement of *Kimigayo* (national anthem) brought by a Christian music teacher (opposing compulsory performance of *Kimigayo*)
- NCCJ German Church Relation Committee met candidate for WCC Scholarship

## February

- 2 Inaugural meeting of Japan Network on History Education
- 7 Interfaith gathering on requisitioning nuclear policy of Japan
- 8 Interfaith gathering on peace
- 12 NGO network meeting on humanitarian aid to DPR Korea.
- 25 Network meeting on Afghan refugees in Japan
- 28 Meeting to oppose "Emergency Legislation"

## March

- 1 World Day of Prayer Meeting in Tokyo
- 8-11 CCA/ WCC Follow-up Meeting of North East Asia Justice and Peace initiatives in Tokyo
- 15 Lecture Meeting on Ecumenism for newly graduated Seminary Students organized by the Division of Christian Education of NCC-J
- 21-24 Ecumenical Youth Forum in Tokyo
- 25-27 NCCJ Peace Caravan in Kawasaki and Yoshimihiyaketsu

## April

- 3 Joint Action to oppose "Emergency Legislation" in front of Diet Building.
- 10 Extended Preparatory Committee Meeting on Japan/German Church Consultation in 2003
- 12-13 National Gathering of Christian Peace Network in Tokyo
- 13 First anniversary meeting commemorating hunger strike by Kim Young Jin's (member of South Korean National in front of the Japanese Diet building to protest the textbooks issue.
- 29 Peace walk for Palestine

## May

- 12 CCA/ Asia Sunday on the theme "Timor—Hope for New Life" in Tokyo.

## IMPORTANT: NEW SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

See page 11 for new information on how to subscribe to JCAN.

JCAN is deeply grateful for the dedicated work of Charlie McJilton as Assistant Editor of JCAN. Charlie's many duties as Executive Director of Food Bank Japan mean that he now regretfully has to step down, although he will still be active as a regular contributor and volunteer. JCAN welcomes Hisashi Yukimoto as the new Co-Editor. Hisashi's profile is on page 11.



## JCAN Editorial Committee and Volunteer Members

Co-editors: Rev Claudia Genung-Yamamoto and Hisashi Yukimoto

Committee: Rev. Toshi Yamamoto, Rev Kenichi Otsu (NCCJ General Secretary), Charlie McJilton, Claire Debenham, Reiko Fujino.